

Security Council Open Debate on Working Methods

November 30th 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E Mr. Wittig, Representative of Germany

Mr. President, I, too, should like to thank you for having initiated today's open debate. It provides a good opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved so far and where improvements could be made.

Much has been achieved. Discussions at this year's retreat for the incoming newly elected members were also dedicated to ideas and suggestions on how to improve the work of the Council and make it more transparent and efficient.

The regular briefings by the Department of Political Affairs are an important improvement, particularly in the context of the Arab Spring. These briefings have allowed for discussions on matters of international peace and security that have not yet become formal agenda items. They also allow the Council to be more flexible and responsive to evolving situations on the ground, contributing also to a stronger preventive role of the Council.

Among the Council's subsidiary bodies, the sanctions committees have become a major field of activity for the Council and its members. Here, too, the working methods have become more efficient and transparent over the past years. The establishment of a focal point for delisting, and, in the case of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, of an Ombudsperson in particular are important innovations with direct benefit for the wider United Nations membership.

There is also some discussion on the selection procedure and the accountability of the expert panels established to support the sanctions committees in their work. While a discussion on this issue may be warranted, it is our view that this should neither result in excessively delaying the beginning of the work of new experts, nor lead to any infringement on the independence of such experts in the implementation of their mandate. It is precisely their independence, combined with their expert knowledge, that provides the added benefit not only to the Security Council but also to the wider United Nations membership. We thus are strongly in favour of their reports, as a general rule, being made public.

An open and transparent relationship between the Security Council and the wider United Nations membership remains crucial for the political acceptance and relevance of the Council, as well as for the implementation of its resolutions. As President of the Security Council for the month of July 2011, Germany drafted the introduction of the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly (A/66/2). In preparing for the compilation of the report, we built on the good practice of holding, together with Nigeria and Portugal, an informal meeting with the wider United Nations membership. We also asked the presidency to separate the debates on the annual report and on the issue of Security Council reform in order to allow for a more focused debate on both issues. These are but two examples of how the Council can better satisfy the legitimate interests of the broader membership in enhanced transparency and accessibility of the Council in its work.

We fully agree with the goal expressed in your concept paper, Mr. President, preparing for today's

debate, of improving involvement by all stakeholders such as concerned non-members of the Council and relevant regional organizations. Concrete steps could include more frequent use of the Arria-formula meetings or giving troop contributors and other stakeholders the opportunity for joint input in Council consultations. We also share the goal of enhancing the role of the Military Staff Committee. We appreciate the current practice of regular informal meetings of the Committee open to all 15 members of the Council, and encourage its continuation.

The relationship between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has become more interactive and dynamic. The chairpersons of the PBC country-specific configurations now regularly brief the Council when a particular country's situation is under consideration. They bring to the table a different perspective that can complement the Council's assessment of a given situation. In this context, their participation in Council consultations should also be envisaged. There is also still potential for improvement in ensuring that the Council can and will draw on the PBC's advice on broader peacebuilding perspectives.

Important progress has been made in enhancing the relationship between the Security Council and thematic Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, such as those for children and armed conflict and sexual violence in conflict. Similarly, the briefings provided by the Executive Director of UN-Women and representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have been important to the Council's work. In our view, the Council has greatly benefited from their analyses and reports. The same holds true for the briefings provided by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. Germany supports regular participation by these Offices in briefings and at consultations of the Security Council.

We also believe that the Council should be more open to an enhanced relationship with the Human Rights Council, not least because of the role that the independent commissions of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council play in several situations on the Security Council's agenda. Lastly, we welcome the initiative of Member States in presenting concrete proposals for reform of the working methods of the Security Council.

As I mentioned before, we support many of the ideas contained in the initiative proposed by the so-called group of five small nations. However, Germany strongly supports improvement of the Council's working methods as part of a comprehensive reform of the Council. Focusing only on its working methods resembles a band-aid approach to a more structural issue that, in our view, can be addressed only by making the membership of the Council more representative of the world we live in today.